

THE IRISH PROBLEM.

LATE DEFEAT OF THE GLADSTONE MINISTRY.
GLADSTONE THE VICTIM OF HIS OWN RHETORIC.
THE EDUCATIONAL GRIEVANCE GREATLY EXAGGERATED—VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS EXAMINED.

[FROM AN OCCASIONAL CORRESPONDENT OF THE TRIBUNE.]
DUBLIN, March 15.—Another British Cabinet has been wrecked on the rocks of the "Irish Difficulty." The strongest Government that ever dealt with Irish questions, the Government that did more than all other Governments that preceded it to abolish the evils entailed by conquest and persecution, has gone to the bottom in a sea scarcely ruffled by a breeze, in sight of land, in the presence almost of multitudes who wished it a prosperous voyage, and would have saved it. The captain steered the vessel right into the breakers, always caused by the Irish rocks, just as if she was insured for ten times the amount of the cargo, and he was bribed to get rid of her! If there had been a little storm, leaving a swell that made the Irish breakers look more threatening, it was a storm of Mr. Gladstone's own making; and really never was the death of a ship's crew more suicidal.

Mr. Gladstone may be regarded as the victim of his own rhetoric. His Ministry died of the "Upas tree." This tree was the topic of his powerful orations addressed to the electors of Lancashire in his itinerant appeals at the last general election. It had three branches: Protestant Ascendancy, Landlord Oppression, and Educational Disability, the latter being the real religious grievance, "scandalously bad." The removal of the Church Establishment, he was the first British statesman who had even the courage to attempt, or the power to effect. He undertook the gigantic task and succeeded nobly. Others had tried the Band question, but all had indignantly failed. None of the pretenders could bend the bow of Ulisses. Mr. Gladstone did it, as he had done everything, with ease. To establish Religious Equality instead of the ascendancy of a small sect over a nation of thousands over millions, maintained in virtue of invasion, slaughter, burning, desolation, and confiscation, and wrought by ages of usage and conflict into the framework of the Constitution—was a glorious achievement. To rescue 60 or 70 millions sterling of property belonging of right to the tenants from the grasp of the landlords, who held it iniquitously by laws of their own making, and made it the instrument of their political and social domination, was a work fully as difficult, scarcely less glorious, and certainly not less beneficial to the country. Both together these measures constituted a great revolution, putting an end to a system of injustice entailed by confiscation and persecution, and, though much mitigated by previous legislation, still grievously embittering the relations of social and political life.

But the third limb of the upas, the Educational grievance, though originally the worst part of the penal code, was greatly exaggerated in Mr. Gladstone's imagination. It had been from time to time almost entirely cut away, and the remnant of the poisonous trunk might have been quietly removed, by carrying out a little further principles already in operation. The laws passed in the eighteenth century against the education of Catholics were bad enough, but not half as pernicious as the education provided for them by Primate Boulton and the Irish Parliament. Mr. Froude says that the system of the Charter Schools was the most admirable the world had till then seen. If so it only proves that the Ascendancy System was so diabolically vicious that its handiwork turned the best of blessings into the worst of curses. From the day that their abominations were exposed by Howard, the philanthropist, till the withdrawal of the Government grant early in the present century, they produced evil only, and that continually. Though the governors were bishops and the masters were clergymen, Commission after Commission, Inspector after Inspector, told the same horrid story of cruelty, starvation, slavery, ignorance, degradation, dirt, vice, and disease. No reform could be effected. Masters might be dismissed by the score, but their successors were no better than those they supplanted. With few exceptions they all succumbed to the moral plague, and if abuses were clamored for a brief season, the streams of corruption broke through with increased force and more detestable fountains. Even their Sub-Clerical Inspectors were obliged to acknowledge the astonishing contrast, physical, intellectual, and moral, presented by the Roman Catholic children in the hedge-schools and private day-schools that flourished beside the Government institutions, when the penal laws were relaxed or repealed. Of all the experiments of English statesmanship in the Government of Ireland the hateful Charter Schools were the most signally failure, because they violated nature by taking away the children from their parents, and shutting them up in boarding establishments where there was no one to care for their bodies or souls, and everything to develop and foster depravity.

But more enlightened views of a more Christian spirit began to prevail in the early part of this century; and a number of gentlemen of different denominations, including Catholics, founded a society for the education of the poor in Ireland. This society got a Parliamentary grant, and from the place of its meeting, it was known as "The Kildare Society." There it had its model schools, its training schools for teachers, and there it issued its excellent school-books, maps, &c. It required the reading of the Scriptures by Roman Catholics, but they were allowed to have the Roman Testament, without note and comment. With this mixed system the Roman Catholic prelates were for years contented, and prelates, as well as Catholic laymen, worked cordially with their Protestant countrymen. But it could not have been regarded as permanently satisfactory, because it was contrary to the principles of the Church of Rome to allow the laity, especially children, the use of the Scriptures without clerical guidance in their study. The way, however, was prepared for the establishment by the late Lord Derby, of the "National System," which has now flourished for 40 years, though opposed and annihilated by each of the churches in turn. It is founded on the principle of "United Secular Education," combined with separate religious instruction. This principle was first sanctioned by the hierarchy of that time, Archbishop Murray was one of the commissioners, and worked most harmoniously with Archbishop Whately and the other Protestants on the Board till his death. Bishop Denvir of Down and Connor was also a commissioner, until the Pope or Dr. Cullen compelled him to retire. The late Primate Croll was a warm supporter of the principle of united education. So also was the late Bishop Doyle. Indeed the National System fully realized all that the hierarchy had demanded, until Cardinal Cullen came with ultramontane pretensions and restless aggressions. As it is, the Catholics enjoy about four-fifths of the grant, which amounts to £247,000. Total since 1821, £7,242,376. There is nothing of the upas here. If there is it bears an abundance of very welcome fruit.

There is a number of endowed intermediate schools, royal and diocesan, on which there was a commission about 12 years ago, and which, after long inquiry, recommended that they should be thrown open to Roman Catholics, as they were originally intended for the whole people. This could have been easily done, utilizing the funds, and supplementing them with a grant, so as to have a complete system of high schools for all denominations, on the united principle, and it should have accompanied or preceded the Queen's Colleges. But it was strangely and culpably neglected, not only by Sir Robert Peel's Government, but by every Liberal Government that followed. The Queen's Colleges are founded on the same united principle as the primary schools, with every possible safeguard for the consciences of Roman Catholics and others, and a careful provision for their religious instruction and direction by "Deans of Residence," selected by the authorities of their respective churches. Roman Catholic students felt no scruple, and incurred no danger, until the Synod of Thurles, in obedience to orders from Rome, denounced the colleges as "Godless," and "dangerous to faith and morals. There never was a charge more unjust; and consequently a fair proportion of Catholic students have continued to attend the Queen's Colleges, which—all adverse circum-

stances considered—have been remarkably successful. The College of Maynooth was established in 1796, from no love to Catholicism, but from State policy. Those were revolutionary times, and the priests, who had been expelled, sought education abroad, and returned with no good feelings for the paternal Government of George III. Up to 1835 the College received an annual grant of nearly £9,000. The grant was always entered in the Irish Estimates, and it was not until the late Mr. Spencer, after Mr. Whalley, made a motion to have the sum struck out, which led to an irritating debate on the doctrine and moral principles for the propagation of which the Protestant tax-payers were called upon to contribute. The bill, which was passed (8 and 9 Vict., c. 25), making the endowment permanent, and placing it beyond the reach of debate on the consolidated fund, was arranged so that the college should accommodate 320 students, who should have "common," i.e., board, as well as education, at the expense of the State. The grant was then £26,380 per annum, and there was a lump sum of £20,000 for buildings in addition. When the Irish Church act was passed, the College of Maynooth got £272,321 as compensation for the withdrawal of the grant. This sum was paid in 1845, and the college has since that time been self-supporting, but being subject to the hierarchy has got absolutely, without being subject to visitation, or any sort of official responsibility. Considering the nature of the teaching of Maynooth, and of the text-books touching heretical, or "atheistical" Governments—to adopt the Pope's phrase—"it cannot be said that the British Parliament has acted in an unbecomingly liberal manner toward the Irish Catholics in the matter of education, especially if we allow for the almost uniform hostility of the young priests to the Government at all times, and especially since the late Mr. Froude's unflattering 'scandalously bad'."

Let us see how the different denominations now stand, under the system of religious equality in the matter of clerical education. The Church of Rome, which was the largest body under the late Act of 1832, with all the buildings erected at the cost of the State. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, which comprised nearly half the Protestant population, had £43,376 as compensation for £1,750, which was paid for six professors, all theological, in a college quite distinct from the Queen's College, Belfast. The Dublin University, which had an average of 12,000 students, enjoys an income from land amounting to £38,000 a year, and earns £27,000 in fees. She has six professors and scholars, which may be won by hard study; but she does not, nor does the Presbyterian Church, give any aid to the ministry, as the State enables Maynooth to do. In this most important respect, Rome is a specially favored church. 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